BEYOND AIRMINDEDNESS:

MANAGING REGIONAL AFFAIRS STRATEGISTS

FOR

JOINT STRATEGIC EFFECT

BY

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The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

In 1997, Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 1315.17 directed the military branches to establish Foreign Area Officer (FAO) programs to meet service-specific needs. The Joint Staff updated and enhanced this guidance in 2005, at which time the Air Force committed to the dedicated development of Regional Affairs Strategists (RAS). Although the services received additional direction on how to manage their FAO programs in the 2007 DOD Instruction 1315.20, the DOD did not prescribe a standardized program for training and utilization. As such, the Army and Air Force pursue two different FAO utilization designs— single track and dual track. This study analyzes how these different utilization models affect the ability of political-military practitioners to transfer salient information back and forth across multiple social domains, spanning from local language networks all the way to military and government domains. Interviews were conducted with fifteen political-military practitioners in order to describe the differences in quality and application between the Army's single-track utilization design and the dual track used by the Air Force. When framed in the context of organizational innovation as pioneered by John F. Padgett and Walter W. Powell, the comparison between single-track and dual-track designs yields numerous strategic implications. To this end, three well-established mechanisms of innovation offer a useful lens to compare and contrast how FAO and RAS utilization affects their ability to leverage strategically important context overseas by linking multiple social domains.

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Introduction

Language, regional and cultural skills are enduring war fighting competencies that are critical to mission readiness in today's dynamic global environment. Our forces must have the ability to effectively communicate with and understand the cultures of coalition forces, international partners, and local populations.

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, August 2011

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

George Bernard Shaw

The Department of Defense (DOD) directed the Military Services to develop Foreign Area Officer (FAO) programs in order to develop deliberately a cadre of political-military specialists capable of providing strategic insight and solutions in support of national policy objectives within international and culture-specific contexts.[1] As such, FAOs are strategic assets and primarily joint in nature.[2] The Armed Forces, however, have not implemented the DOD's policy regarding FAO program development in a uniform or standardized fashion.[3] Consequently, the DOD faces the problem of significantly different, service-specific regimes for FAO career management. The Army FAO program, widely held as the DOD's "gold standard," uses a single-track career path to develop full-time FAOs.[4] In contrast, the Air Force develops Regional Affairs

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[1] Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, "DOD Directive 1315.17, Military Department Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Programs" (Department of Defense, April 28, 2005), 2.

[2] Alrich, Adams and Biltoc, "The Strategic Value of Foreign Area Officers," iii-iv.

[3] In adhering to DOD Directive 1315.17, the USAF instituted the International Affairs Specialists (IAS) Program, outlined in Air Force Instruction 16-109. The IAS Program is service-specific and develops two types of specialists: Political-Military Affairs Strategist (PAS) and Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS). The PAS serve only on political-military tour in their career and have zero foreign language requirements. On the other hand, RAS officers are very much like FAOs and are designed to fill Joint FAO billets with language requirements.

[4] Alrich, Adams and Biltoc, "The Strategic Value of Foreign Area Officers," Institute for Defense Analyses, Document D-4974, August 2013, 47.

Strategists (RAS) using a dual-track model that alternates officers, "between core career field and complementary RAS assignments."[5] Given the Army's success with single-track management, how does the Air Force's dual track path affect the Joint FAO team?[6]

Military and civilian leaders routinely encounter difficult problems across a wide range of competing national policy interests. When problem solving within regional and international constructs, leaders require not only translations or explanations of local context, but they also require context-specific solutions.[7] Without strategies catered to a region's unique culture and politics, good intentions often lead to unintended and unfortunate results, often making a bad situation worse or undermining U.S. foreign policy.[8] Therefore, joint and interagency leaders require extremely capable FAOs with deep in-country experience and professional language skills.[9] In presenting these experts to the joint

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[5] Air Force Instruction 16-109, 3 Sep 2010, 3.

[6] Nicholson offers a succinct overview of how changing from a dual track to full-time FAOs improved the Army's political-military capability in "The Army's Single-Track FAO Program: Pathway to Success," 11-13.

[7] Interagency partners, including some in the intelligence community, have also made this observation. See Martin Petersen's "The Challenge for the Political Analyst," 54. In it, he posits, "If the Intelligence Community is to help policymakers make the best-informed decisions possible, then analysts must bring something to the party—in short, they need to be seen as credible sources of needed expertise. The key is not our objectivity. Senior officials more often than not know the answer they want and are looking for the intelligence to support it. The key is our ability to put the political behavior that policymakers see into a larger cultural and historical context—that they do not see—with enough sophistication to demonstrate that the context matters."

[8] Emile Simpson, *War From the Ground Up,* 115-116. Simpson opines, "the necessity of linking political choices at the tactical level with policy outcomes is a strategic necessity in today's mosaic conflicts," and explains that having a military avoid politics altogether, "would not work in mosaic conflicts, in which tactical actions have a political quality: to refuse to engage in politics would just mean not knowing what political effect one is having, or refusing to discriminate between military courses of actions on a political basis, leading to chaotic outcomes."

[9] The Interagency Language Roundtable describes a professional level in intercultural communication as, "Able to participate successfully in most social, practical, and professional interactions, including those that may require a range of formal and informal language and behavior. Can adapt to a variety of individuals and groups without being misconstrued and transition smoothly from informal to formal styles of communication. Controls nonverbal responses, such as gestures, and handles unfamiliar situations appropriately, including those involving taboos or emotionally-charged subjects. Rarely misreads cultural cues, and can almost always repair

FAO community, the Army and Air Force pursue significantly different paradigms for FAO and RAS utilization.[10] This does not matter much if both systems develop experts. It becomes a problem for the DOD, however, if the Services produce disparately qualified political-military practitioners under a false impression of equal capability.[11]

Over the span of their careers, Army FAOs gain double the experience in country compared with Air Force RAS officers who must routinely fill non-FAO assignments. Again, this does not matter much if the RAS officers remain highly proficient despite long spells outside the FAO world. Unfortunately, this is not the case.[12] When framed in the context of organizational innovation as pioneered by the renowned researchers John F. Padgett and Walter W. Powell, the strategic implications of the single-track vs. dual-track designs become evident:

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misinterpretations. Can understand and make appropriate use of cultural references and expressions, and can usually discuss a variety of issues and subject matter that refer to the culture, such as history, politics, literature, and the arts. Can interpret reading materials and recognize subtleties, implications, and tone. Able to communicate via social media. In professional contexts, the individual can interact appropriately during meetings and provide detailed explanations or reports both in person and in writing. Social behavior and interactions reflect significant knowledge and understanding of cultural expectations."

[10] Although this paper does not focus on them due to limitations in scope and time, the USN and USMC have their own service-specific FAO programs as well.

[11] Air Force Instruction 16-109, 3. The Air Force International Affairs Strategist Program implements DOD Instruction 1315.20, Military Department of Defense Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Programs, by, "deliberately developing a cadre of Airmen with international insight, foreign language proficiency, and cultural understanding. Air Force International Affairs Specialists combine professional military skills with an intimate, nuanced understanding of the history, language, culture, and political-military issues of the countries and regions in which the Air Force may operate, and in certain cases, these officers will have foreign language proficiency."

[12] Alrich, Adams and Biltoc, "The Strategic Value of Foreign Area Officers," 7, 15-16. This report concluded that, "In terms of basic FAO skill acquisition, the Army program, as it has currently existed, is largely regarded by both supervisors and FAOs alike as the "ideal" or benchmark compared to all the other Services. Based on our interviews, this perspective was shared across all agencies, all federal departments; and the military Services." More specifically, only 42% of interviewed RASs responded either "agree" or "strongly agree" that their Service FAO training was "sufficient," compared with 74% for Army respondents. In terms of their "in country" FAO training, only 31% of RASs responded "strong" or "very strong," compared to 86% for Army FAOs. When rating strength of Service in terms of maintaining FAO skills, 60% of RASs responded "weak" or "very weak," compared to the Army's 38%.

not only are Army FAOs better, but RAS officers remain unlikely to develop professional language skills and long-term ties inside host nation social domains.[13] This condition significantly diminishes the impact that RASs will make when serving in FAO billets because they lack persistent participation across key social domains—military, government and language—each specific to coexistent roles that FAOs and RASs fulfill. In the end, the Air Force's desire to keep RAS officers "re-blued" every other assignment undermines the credibility of airminded advocates inside the interagency and Joint FAO teams.[14]

This thesis relies on data collected from fifteen interviews with political-military practitioners to examine the roles FAOs and RASs play in social networks and overlapping social domains. The combined experience of all involved created a road map for how FAOs and, to a lesser extent, RASs bridge cultural gaps and innovate across military, government and language domains. Ultimately, these insights consistently mirror the characteristics and processes in three mechanisms of organizational innovation described by Padgett and Powell.

Officially, the Air Force's International Affairs Specialist (IAS) Program carefully manages RAS officers in order to ensure they are qualified and competitive in their primary specialty while also developing

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[13] Although the "Annual Report on the Air Force Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS) Program 2010," p. 13, confirms the goal for RASs to acquire DLPT language scores of 3/3/3, Air Force Instruction 16-109, p. 8 & 10, which describes the RAS Program, only mandates a 2/2. Without a clear direction to the attainment of DLPT level 3 scores, RASs will likely underperform in language skills. When combined with alternating assignments in non-FAO billets, RASs play only temporary roles in the social domains tied to their country or region of specialty. See also the "Annual Report on the Air Force Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS) Program 2010," 12-17. Of 192 certified RASs, 18 failed to achieve the minimum required DLPT score of 2/2. These 192 RASs scored DLPT level 3/3 in 103 languages, and less than 3/3 in 137. Since many RASs test in multiple languages, at best 103 RASs test at 3/3, or roughly 54%. With the likelihood that numerous polyglot RASs scored at 3/3 in multiple languages, the overall percentage of the RAS cadre unable to attain 3/3 in any single language is likely over 50%.

[14] This assertion based on research interviews discussed more fully in Chapters 2 & 3.

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a, "capability to influence the outcomes of US, allied and coalition operations and to maximize operational capabilities by building partnerships."[15] A paper from the Institute for Defense Analysis concluded that, "single-track FAOs may face difficulty maintaining contemporary operational relevance as military officers," yet the same authors also emphasize the strategic value of FAOs, noting that they best contribute to DOD efforts when serving outside operational duties.[16] In an academic paper on building interagency human capital, Lt Col Christopher Atteberry opined that the burden of effort to make a dual track design succeed falls not on the organization but rather the individual.[17] Since the onus falls on the individual, single-track RASs encounter another problem identified by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General David Goldfein. General Goldfein recently observed that Airmen performing operational duties, "have been asked to bear the brunt of an incredible deployment tempo and manpower shortages... with increased mandatory recurring training, a growing list of additional duties, and the challenge of a 'do-it-your-self' world...."[18] Under such time-constraints, it seems doubtful that RASs can maintain their highly-perishable language and culture skills when also serving in operational assignments.

According to the policies laid out in DOD Directive 1315.17 and the capabilities described in DOD Instruction 1315.20, FAOs and RAS officers are joint assets of strategic value and must be managed by the services accordingly. [19],[20] Much of their strategic value accrues over time

[15] Air Force Instruction 16-109, 10.
[16] Alrich, Adams and Biltoc, "The Strategic Value of Foreign Area Officers," 48-49.
[17] Atteberry, "Overcoming Inertia: Building Human Capital For Interagency Success," 38.
[18] Gen. David L. Goldfein, CSAF Letter to Airmen, "The Beating Heart of the Air Forces... Squadrons!," 9 August 2016.
[19] DOD Directive 1315.17, "Military Department Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Programs," April 28, 2005, 2.
[20] DOD Instruction 1315.20, 28 Sept 2007, "Management of Department of Defense Foreign Area Officer Programs," 2007, 2-3.

by way of participation in foreign social networks.[21] In the long run, the quality of these relations—or lack of relations—plays a significant role in determining the character of the joint FAO community at large as well as the quality of each new generation of FAOs and RAS officers.[22] This paper argues that the single-track model of FAO utilization better harnesses the strategic value of social networks than does the Air Force's dual-tracked RAS program, because the single track better harnesses the processes of innovation demonstrated by Padgett and Powell. To this end, this paper will first summarize the key aspects of Padgett and Powell's mechanism for the emergence of novelty in organizations. Next, a proposed theory will describe how this fits into the specific context of managing FAOs and RAS officers, highlighting three mechanism of innovation. This foundation will then support the empirical work and subsequent observations discussed throughout the rest of the paper.

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[21] Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks,* 203. According to Kadushin, "social network theory is about describing, accounting for, or even predicting interactions between social units that could be people, groups, organizations, countries, ideas, social roles, or just about any social entity that can be named," and that, "network structures of all kinds do develop from repeated interactions over time."
[22] Padgett and Powell*, The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 2. The authors maintain that, "In the short run, actors make relations; in the long run, relations make actors." In this context, one can argue that if individual RAS officers fail to achieve dense relations in FAO billets due to a lack of assignment continuity, over time the RAS program itself will reflect these relations, or lack of relations.

Chapter 1

Long-Term Results: Why Social Networks Matter

Padgett and Powell's seminal collaboration, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets*, highlights several mechanisms that explain how new organizations and people emerge out of multiple, co-existent social networks. According to Padgett and Powell, social networks are autocatalytic entities that form resiliencies over time but are not immune to change. Although this view of innovation found inspiration in the self-generating autocatalysis of biochemistry, it lends itself well to social network theory.[1] Within the social context, *autocatalysis* refers to a relational, process-driven perspective of life:

> ...the objects that carry life—organisms, people, organizations, languages—are demoted from being Enlightenment-like autonomous agents to becoming transient carriers (almost Petri dishes, albeit sometimes very sophisticated ones) of the reproducing transformational dynamic of life that flows through them all.[2]

Specifically, three key concepts unfold from this view of social network autocatalysis and as such remain relevant to the FAO/RAS discussion: non-linear production, repair and invention.

According to Padgett and Powell's well-documented framework, products, words and people flow through networks in non-linear means.[3] Indeed, networks are not merely channels used to connect input with

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[1] Their research notes that "autocatalysis" can be understood in a number of ways; biochemical, economic, social and linguistic lenses offer four perspectives from which to analyze the self-replicating nature of autocatalytic networks.

[2] Padgett and Powell, blog post, *emergence of organizations and markets, part I.*

[3] Their foundational research is rather robust with 15 empirical case studies. See also Padgett, Lee and Collier, "Economic Production as Chemistry," and Padgett and McLean, "Organizational Invention and Elite Transformation: The Birth of Partnership Systems in Renaissance Florence."

output. Instead, Padgett and Powell observed social networks to be far more complex:

> Neither information nor products are inert sacks of potatoes passing through passive networks-as-pipes. Information is transformed through communication protocols, and products are transformed through production rules. Either way, social networks don't just pass things; they do transformational work.[4]

Causal feedback, over time, leads to self-regulation through these relational protocols and production rules. Put another way, "Think of this as technology in the case of products, conversation in the case of words, and learning in the case of people."[5] This aspect, especially in terms of language and learning, remains central to the discussion in subsequent chapters on why FAO/RAS participation in multiple, meaningful social networks is so important.

Another signature feature of autocatalytic networks is the ability for self-repair. Think of resiliency in human economies, cultures and organizations—if you lose a chunk of it, the remaining elements can recreate a substantial amount, if not all, of the lost portion. For example, consider the 2011 downing of a CH-47 in Afghanistan that killed 30 Americans, of which 17 were SEALs. Although tragic, this loss did not spell the end of SEAL Team Six. In time, remaining elements were able to reconstitute according to known communication protocols and production rules. Similar to non-linear production, resiliency is a major consideration for how FAO and RAS programs utilize personnel.

Innovation and invention underpin the third concept central to autocatalytic networks. In terms of social networks, adherence to protocols and rules over time leads to stasis or equilibrium. In fact, numerous networks can exist in close proximity, each in its own equilibrium. Novelty appears by way of introduction, often in an

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[4] Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 9.
[5] Padgett and Powell, blog post, *emergence of organizations and markets, part I.*

intrusive manner, of production skills or communication protocols from one network to another. This transposition of novelty occurs quite frequently and across many networks, but typically does not change the new host network in a radical, redefining way. Padgett and Powell call this novelty innovation. Consider squadron commanders seamlessly introducing social media tools, such as Facebook or Twitter, into their leadership routines. Social networks typically remain unchanged by such transpositions due to their resilient nature.

In rare cases, however, a network transforms and begins to function in an entirely new way because of overlapping protocols or rules—acquiring the new and discarding the old. Padgett and Powell call this transformation invention.[6] Consider the introduction of airplanes into combat during World War I and the subsequent creation of a new service branch, the U.S. Air Force, some three decades later.[7] The technology itself did not transform the organization; rather the communication protocols and rules of production unique to the flying community clashed with the Army's core social network. Over time, innovation led to invention and a new organization took form. This example highlights a key concept put forth by Padgett and Powell: "In the short run, actors make relations; in the long run, relations make actors."[8] In other words, individuals made the Air Force; now the Air Force makes Airmen. The notion of *airmindedness* directly supports this phenomenon.[9] To what extent this concept holds true for the RAS program will be discussed in Chapter 3.

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[6] Padgett and Powell liken this phenomenon is likened to Joseph Schumpeter's concept of "creative destruction" in economics, albeit from a biochemistry perspective.

[7] The United Kingdom created its Royal Air Force in 1918 as a separate service, highlighting the importance of cultural, social and historical factors that can influence the emergence of organizational novelty.

[8] Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 2.

[9] "The perspective of Airmen is necessarily different; it reflects a unique appreciation of airpower's potential, as well as the threats and survival imperatives unique to Airmen." *Air Force Doctrine Document 1,* 19-20.

Multiple Stacked Domains

Having described the key aspects of social networks, we can now examine them from a perspective of overlapping domains. This concept is similar to the "Swiss cheese" model often associated with flight safety and crew resource management, depicted in the left side of Figure 1 below.[10] In this graphic, the red arrow represents a chain of hazards or errors that ultimately leads to an accident or loss. Therefore, in the flight safety context, one desires a negative objective: do not crash.
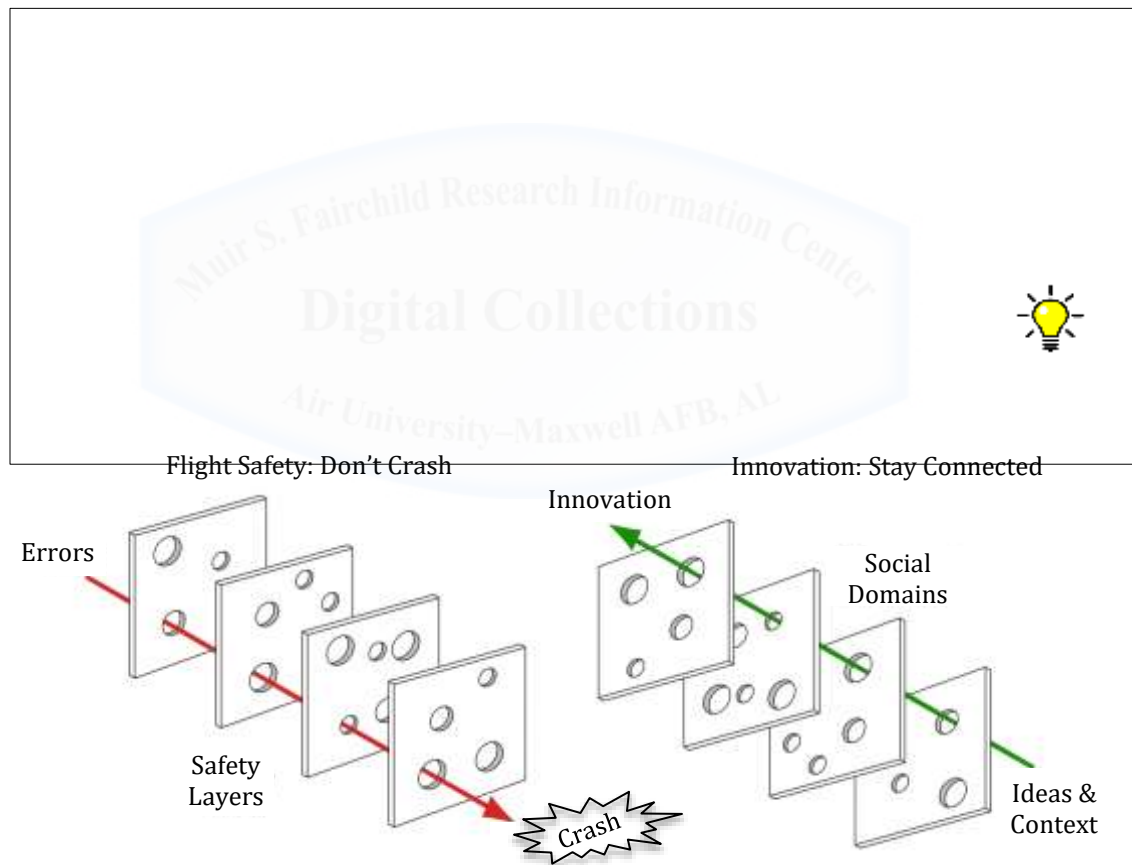
Figure 1. Swiss Cheese Model.
Source: Graphic elements by Dante Orlandella and James Reason

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[10] Graphic elements by Dante Orlandella and James Reason, University of Manchester: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swiss_cheese_model#/media/File:Swiss_cheese_model_of_accident_causation.png

Padgett and Powell's concept of stacked domains applies a similar concept, albeit with a positive objective. The difference is that Padgett and Powell's framework observes how innovation flows from one domain to another (Figure 1, right side). In this case, the green line represents a person carrying the innovative content through small windows of opportunity. As such, Padgett and Powell's concept applied to the Swiss cheese model depicts a positive objective: innovate by keeping holes open and aligned with desired domains. For example, the green line could be a FAO and the holes of cheese are social networks in the domains where she plays a role. When properly aligned, these social connections allow the positive flow of innovative content. Think culturally specific ideas that carry strategic significance for an ambassador, combatant commander or other senior leader.

On the following page, Figure 2 depicts a sample architecture of multiple social domains relevant to FAOs and RASs.[11] Padgett and Powell aver that the coexistence of multiple networks, each relatively static in its own equilibrium, always harbors the potential for a transfer of novelty. The required ingredient is a method to bridge networks. In this context, FAOs and RAS officers play a significant role in cross-cultural transposition because they themselves become the carriers of innovation across domains of networks. Sometimes this role is welcome, at other times outsiders view it as trespassing. Indeed, many possibilities can arise from social interaction across domains:

> It is well recognized by scholars in the social-network tradition that micropatterns of topological overlay among different types of social networks can induce cross-sectional behavioral effects.[12] At the social psychological level, different ways of nesting various roles in a single person can induce role strain, autonomy, informational access, or even freedom from

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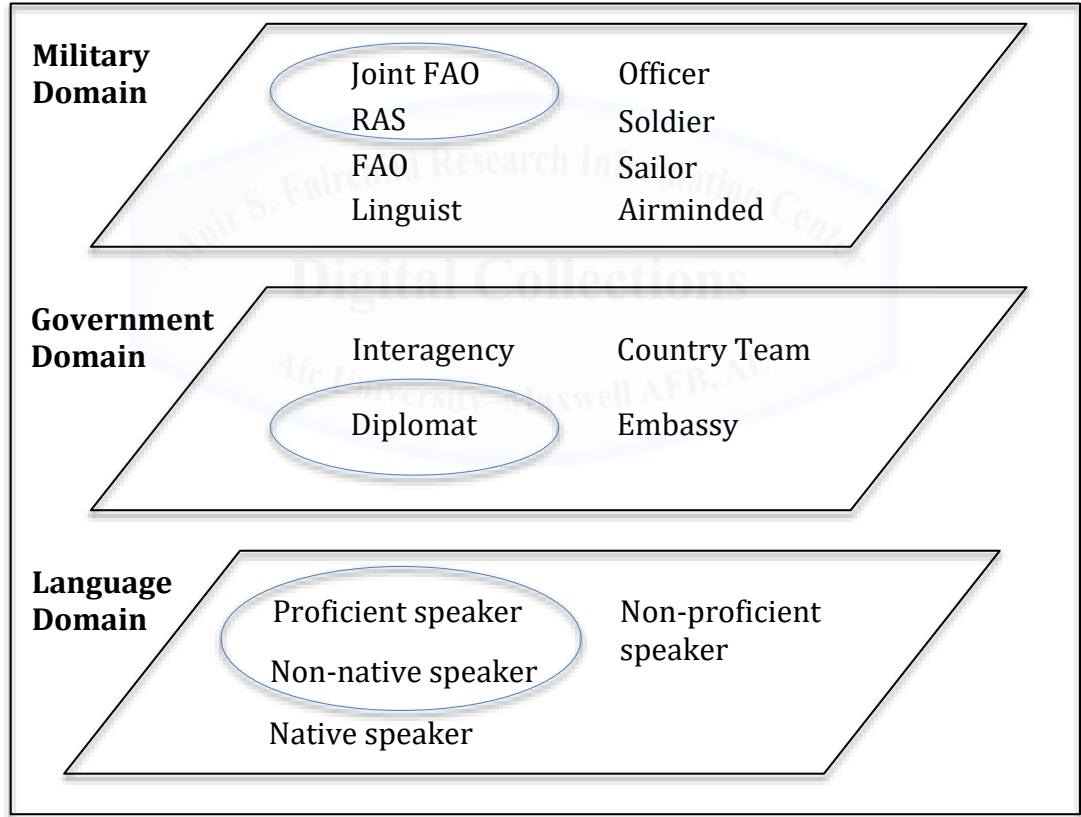
[11] Figure 2 is modeled upon Padgett's research on the birth of partnership systems in Renaissance Florence; see Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 168-207; figure 6.1 served as a template.
[12] Granovetter, 1985.

social control. At the transactional level, the
embeddedness or multiplexity of one type of tie in
another can induce trust, normative reframing, or
changes in time horizons.[13]

It is typical for hybrid actors, such as FAOs, to participate in multiple
domains with different roles. For example, a joint FAO in Figure 2 could
also act on additional identities across domains, such as an airminded
diplomat who participates in host nation community networks with
proficient but non-native language skills (see blue circles). Sometimes
these multiple roles clash and cause tension, while in other instances
they align in purpose and lead to fruitful transpositions across domains.

Military Domain	
Joint FAO	Officer
RAS	Soldier
FAO	Sailor
Linguist	Airminded

Government Domain	
Interagency	Country Team
Diplomat	Embassy

Language Domain	
Proficient speaker	Non-proficient speaker
Non-native speaker	
Native speaker	

Figure 2. Sample Multiple-Network Architecture. Three co-existent networks are
depicted—Military, Government and Language. An individual may reside in more than
one network simultaneously. Sample social identities are listed inside each plane to
emphasize the hybrid nature of those individuals who participate in multiple networks.
In other words, hybrid individuals have nested identities. Blue circles highlight roles
that could be nested in a single person—a RAS serving as a cultural liaison at an

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[13] Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 6-7.

overseas military installation with strong but non-native language proficiency. Additional roles not listed are possible.
Source: Padgett and Powell, The Emergence of Organizations and Markets
Note: Adapted from source Figure 6.1

The reason why overlapping domains prove so important to studying change is that when innovation spillover actually occurs across domains, it must travel through common parts.[14] These common parts are the multiple roles nested in a single, hybrid person. To further illustrate this concept, Figure 3 depicts cross-domain innovation using the same three domains from the previous example, but utilizing a real multiple-domain ensemble from research on transposition and refunctionality.[15] In the figure, oblongs depict formal organizations. Vertical lines are people while dots represent the roles they play. As
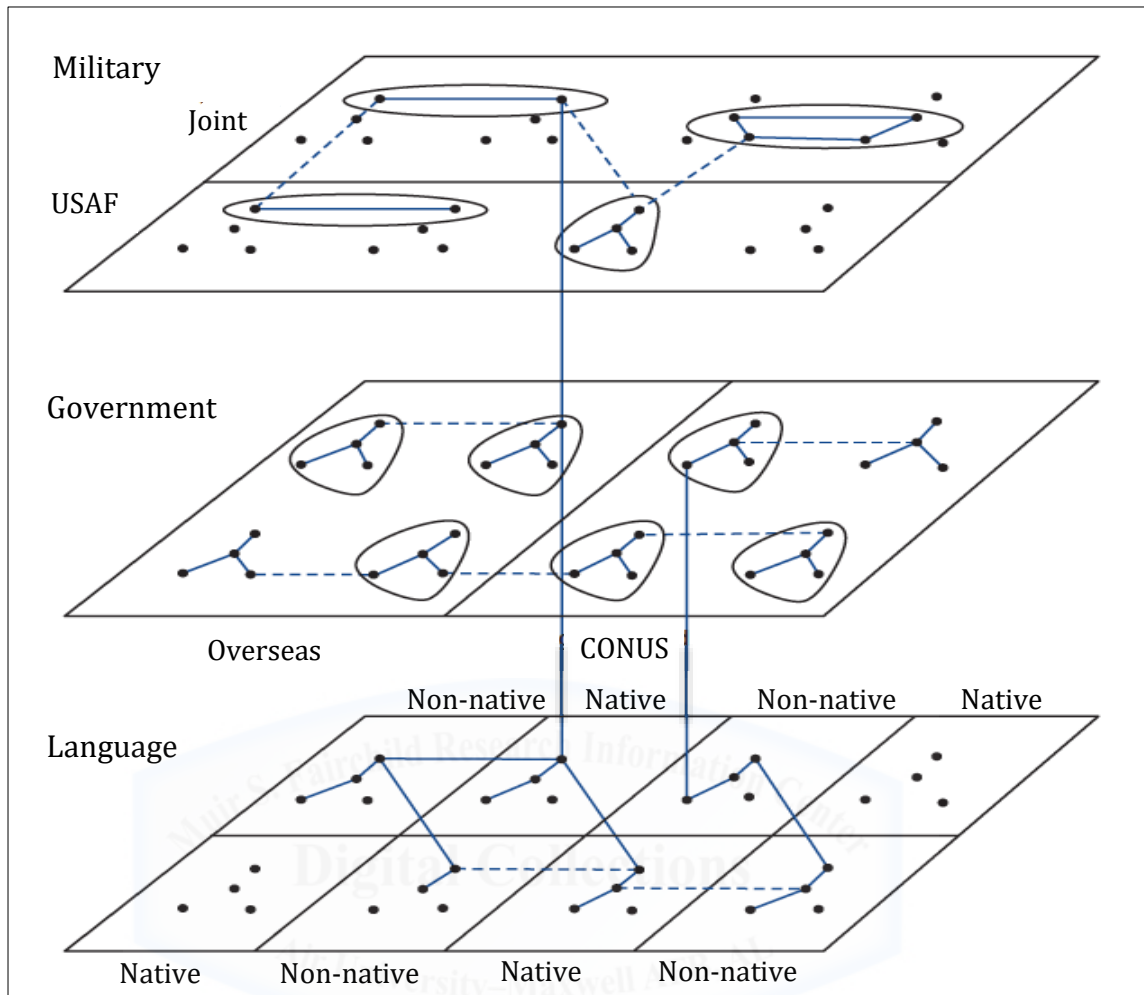
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[14] Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 11.

[15] Figure 3 is modeled upon Padgett's research on the birth of partnership systems in Renaissance Florence; see Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 168-207; figure 6.1 served as a template.

Figure 3. Multiple-network ensemble. Three domains of co-existent social networks are depicted. Solid lines depict resource relations, dotted lines show social exchanges, and oblongs are formal organizations. People are vertical lines and dots are their roles. Hybrid actors can have roles in multiple domains (only two people are shown for illustrative purpose). A Venn diagram appears when looking top down over a superimposed image of all three domains.
Source: Padgett and Powell, The Emergence of Organizations and Markets
Note: Adapted from source Figure 6.1

such, the lines connecting through multiple dots depict a hybrid individual—a FAO or RAS—who participates in more than one domain.

Hybrid actors link domains vertically in Figure 3. In this way Padgett and Powell concept of innovation occurs as vertical spillover from one domain to another. In contrast, invention—if it occurs at all—is horizontal spillover within a single domain, touching one or more social networks. Some research models find it instructive to further identify

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networks as relational (i.e. through resources) or constitutive (i.e. through people), depicted as dotted and solid lines respectively.[16]

Three Mechanisms for Generating Innovation

Overall, Padgett and Powell's framework contains eight mechanisms by which innovation occurs across multiple-network architectures. Three of these mechanism relate directly to the debate on how to best manage FAO and RAS practitioners: transposition and refunctionality; incorporation and detachment; and robust action and multivocality. The rest of this chapter discusses how these mechanisms relate in theory to the joint FAO team.

1. Transposition and Refunctionality

In transposition and refunctionality, one domain's relational practice moves to another and becomes reused in a new way. In this sense, innovation equates to repurposing an old tool.[17] This kind of network feedback typically transfers through people and skills. For example, Figure 4 below depicts the innovative nature of the FAO as a repurposed individual, merging the duties of a classic military officer and civilian diplomat to new effect.[18] In Figure 4, the military diplomat bridges two social networks with vertical lines depicting transposition across the social networks and horizontal lines constituting the lateral spillover of this action within a single domain. Consider a FAO or RAS, perhaps previously a maintenance specialist, working in an embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation with a goal to facilitate new foreign military sales

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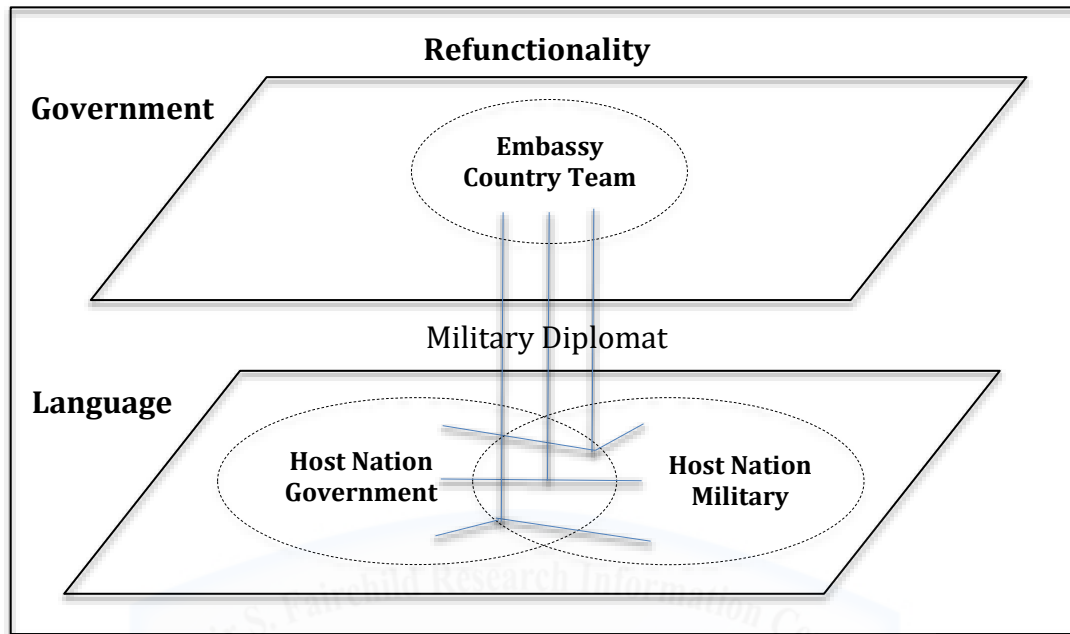[16] Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 170.

[17] Padgett and Powell, blog post, *emergence of organizations and markets, part 2*

[18] Figure 4 and Figure 5 are both modeled after Padgett & Powell's research on the genesis of partnership systems in Renaissance Florence. See their work *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 168-208. Figures 1.2a, 1.3a, 12-15, served as templates.

contracts on behalf of the U.S. government and industry partners. A hybrid skill-set naturally suits this endeavor.

Figure 4. Refunctionality. Transpositions and feedbacks across multiple social networks create organizational novelty.
Source: Padgett and Powell, The Emergence of Organizations and Markets
Note: Adapted from source Figure 1.2a

In Figure 5, an informal group of host nation officers transforms via transposition into a formal partner of the ambassador's country team. In this example, political co-optation (see upward arrows) incentivizes a new relationship of enhanced security cooperation based on communication protocols already part of normal embassy activity. Consider a FAO or RAS from the embassy bridging informal relationships in the host nation, perhaps over time during unrelated community activities, with Title 10 programs already in the region that fund efforts in building partner capacity. Downward arrows reflect security mobilization activities as a process culminating with a formalized partnership.
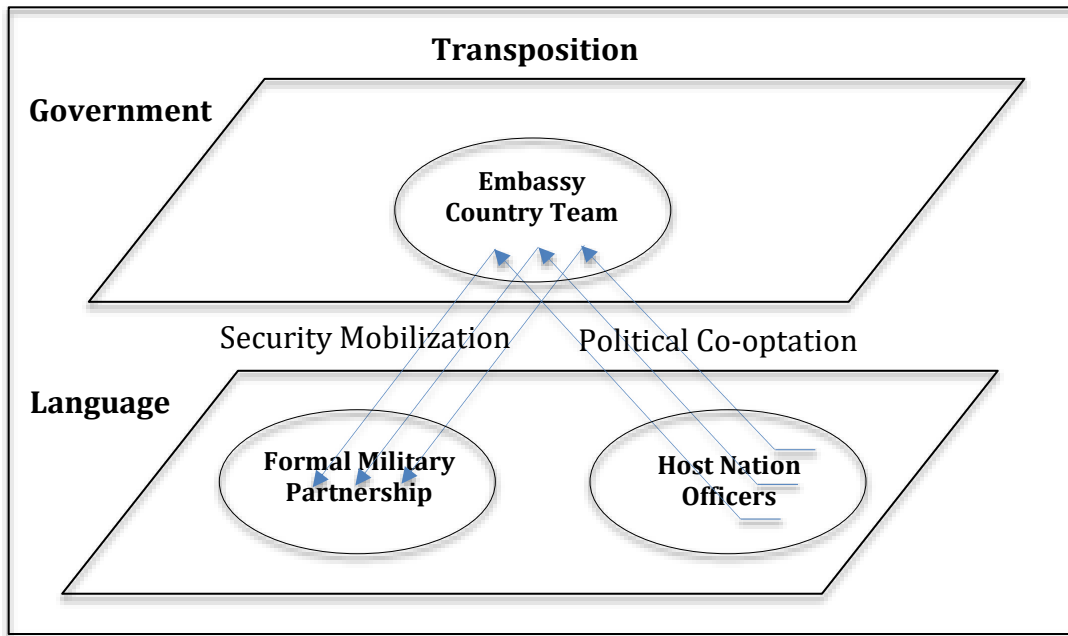
Figure 5. Transposition. Transpositions and feedbacks across multiple social networks create organizational novelty.
Source: Padgett and Powell, The Emergence of Organizations and Markets
Note: Adapted from source Figure 1.3a

2. Incorporation and Detachment

Padgett and Powell explain the organizational genesis mechanism

of incorporation and detachment as:

> …the insertion of a connected chunk of one network
> into another, at first without detaching it from its
> original network. A hybrid organization forms in the
> (perhaps tension-laden) incorporation overlap. The
> hybrid eventually detaches to find its own exchange
> relations.[19]

Figure 6 depicts incorporation and detachment in a Joint FAO context,

using the example of military officers introduced as attachés into U.S.

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[19] Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 16.

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embassies around the world.[20,21] In this case, attaché offices began as hybrid organizations with overlapping identities, often supported by connections within the host nation (solid upward arrows). Over time, offices of security cooperation detached from the traditional military presence of defense attaché functions to form new exchange relations in the host nation (solid downward arrows). These new relations spun off into military-to-military relations no longer formally associated with the observe-and-report functions tied to attaché offices. This process also facilitated whole-of-government transpositions into the host nation's economy through military-to-military cooperation and other business-related interests (dashed up arrows).

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[20] Figure 6 is modeled after Padgett & Powell's research on the genesis of medieval corporations in Dugento Tuscany. See *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 121-145 and figure 1.4a, 17.

[21] George A. D'Angelo provides a good summary of the attaché program's origins in, "The Contemporary Role of the Military Attaché and Problems Relating to the Attainment of a Quality Corps." He notes that U.S. attaché posts were first established in Paris, London, Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg after Congress authorized funding in House with the Act of September 22, 1888, ch. 1026, 25 stat.
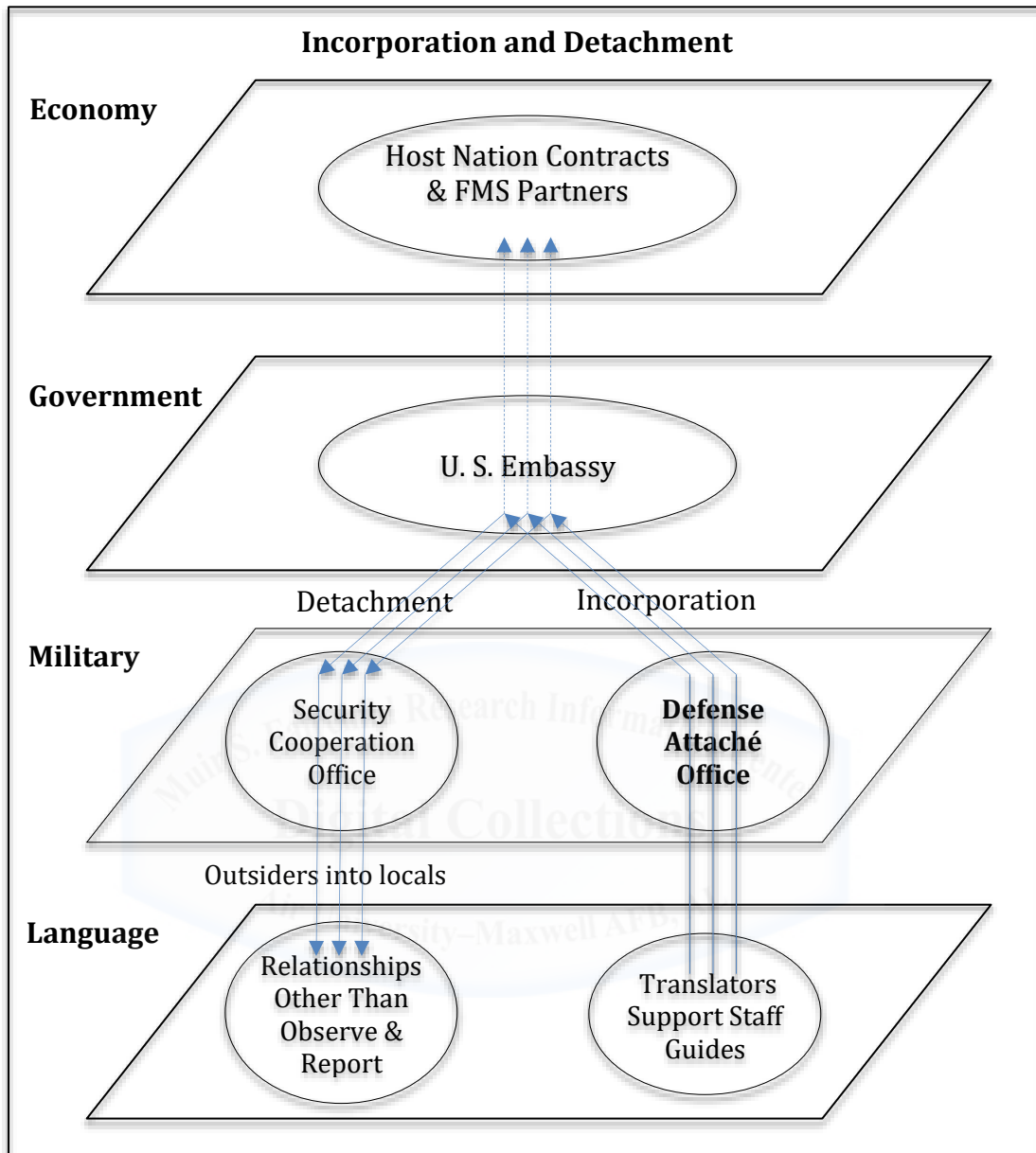
Figure 6. Incorporation and Detachment. Over time, security cooperation work detaches from other military functions at U.S. embassies.
Source: Padgett and Powell, The Emergence of Organizations and Markets
Note: Adapted from source Figure 1.4a

3. Robust Action and Multivocality

The final mechanism for innovation, robust action and multivolcality, embodies a strategic understanding of social networks and involves a central power broker. In this construct, the broker

maintains multiple, nested identities across social networks. The broker also faces adversarial competition. Therefore, the broker initiates robust actions in order to keep open its options for bridging within and across social domains vis-à-vis competitors. Padgett and Powell describe these robust actions as:

> ...noncommittal actions that keep future lines of action open in strategic contexts where opponents are trying to narrow them. Successful robust action may ensue when a central broker bridges to segregate blocks of mutual-dislike supporters through distinct networks. The broker's multiple identities are ambiguous, not in the sense of being vague or uncertain but in the sense that multiple audiences attribute different interests to the broker.[22]

The strategic importance of and the hedging dynamics involved in taking robust actions places a great amount of judgment on FAOs and requires a great deal of experience.[23] Chapters 3 and 4 discuss in further detail the implications of robust action.

Summary

Intuitively, one can surmise that a single-track FAO will outperform a dual-track RAS through a simple rule of thumb: the more one does something, the better she will be at it. Such simplistic axioms may be true much of the time, but sometimes they prove to be incorrect. Therefore, viewing the FAO utilization debate through a sufficiently robust lens is required to make well-informed conclusions. Padgett and

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[22] Padgett and Powell, blog post, *emergence of organizations and markets, part 2.*

[23] Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War,"* 195. In reflecting upon how country analysts in the intelligence community can improve, Jervis contends that analysts should be capable of assessments based on country-specific politics or history. He then opines that, "This requires deep knowledge of the country... The IC needs much greater competence in foreign languages, cultures, and histories. This means allowing some analysts to focus on a country or a region for extended periods of time, and perhaps for an entire career."

Powell's mechanism for the emergence of novelty across overlapping domains of social networks helps to explain how hybrid actors with nested roles can create opportunities for organizational innovation. This mechanism has significant relevance for military practitioners, particularly FAOs and RASs, as well as general implications for social, political and economic change.

In the political-military context, FAOs and RASs will ideally take on roles in social networks across multiple domains as hybrid actors, thereby positioning themselves as potential transmitters of novelty—possibly even invention. Three sample domains (military, government, and language) offer an instructional ensemble to isolate and illustrate the crucial role FAOs and RASs can play in terms of facilitating innovation. Three specific mechanisms for generating novelty suit this topic: transposition and refunctionality, incorporation and detachment and robust action and multivocality. The preliminary discussion on these mechanisms appears to support the inclination that frequency matters regarding joint FAO performance. This supposition results because, according to Padgett and Powell's construct, innovation "occurs through parts in common," such as when multiple roles are performed by a hybrid actor.[24]

Remaining outside of the language domain for too long, such as when serving in a non-RAS billet, can sever physical links to innovative content. As such, RAS officers remain less likely than their single-track FAO counterparts to transpose context of a strategic nature from the language domain into the military or government domains. If it has not already happened, the stabilizing inertia of production rules and relational protocols inside Air Force social networks will, over time, normalize its cadre of RAS officers to function only minimally in the strategic business of innovation. After all, *"In the short run, actors make*

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[24] Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 10.

relations; in the long run, relations make actors." In this sense, RAS officers may be destined to spend most of their career bouncing between the military and government domains without ever bridging the cultural gaps that make the joint FAO mission so vital to national security.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Given the scope of my research and resource limitations, I chose ethnography-style interviews as a tool with which to examine more deeply how FAOs and RASs differ in social networks and overlapping domains. Researchers often conduct interviews to, "resolve seemingly conflicting information, because the researcher has the direct opportunity to ask about the apparent conflict."[1] Although a wide range of formats exists, interviews typically follow one of three general designs: structured, unstructured or semi-structured. For this paper, I conducted semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured approach focuses on a particular topic but allows the interviewer to direct the conversation in a flexible manner without a rigid script or prescribed order of discussion.[2]

Semi-structured interviews offer several advantages when conducting qualitative research or testing a hypothesis. First, interviews gather insight into personal motivations, experience and attitudes that otherwise remain unavailable in the topic's literature.[3] Second, the semi-structured format uses follow-on, probing questions to ascertain emphasis and depth of feeling. Follow-on questions also afford the researcher an opportunity to readdress answers for enhanced clarity.[4] Third, researchers routinely conduct interviews off the record or for

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[1] Harrell, Margaret C. and Melissa A. Bradley, *Data Collection Methods: Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Groups* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009), 18.
[2] Corbetta, P., *Social Research Theory, Methods and Techniques* (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 270.
[3] Eccles, Kathryn and Eric T. Meyer, "Why should I conduct interviews?" (Oxford Internet Institute, http://microsites.oii.ox.ac.uk/tidsr/kb/32/why-should-i-conduct-interviews), accessed May 2017.
[4] Harrell and Bradley, *Data Collection Methods,* 52-3.

background or deep background information.[5] Non-attribution and anonymity encourage honest and complete answers that official inquiries sometimes lack, especially when answers address sensitive topics or are negative in nature.

Despite their utility, interviews remain susceptible to structural disadvantages. If not properly designed or conducted, biases and errors—from the interviewer, interviewee or both—can skew the answers.[6] For example, vague, emotional, or leading questions can negatively affect the results.[7] In addition, sample size and participant selection may adversely affect results if not properly considered.[8] The sample size should reflect the overall community or group as best as possible in order to collect reliable data. Random sampling offers a standard approach to respondent selection.[9] However, researchers use a variety of sampling techniques depending on access to respondents, time and availability.[10]

Given the advantages and disadvantages of interviewing, my research data serves as a plausibility probe. In other words, the interviews provide only an initial, non-definitive examination of the hypothesis: the RAS cadre will never consistently deliver the strategic impact envisioned by the DOD until the Air Force implements a single-track career path. Although information provided by the research group generally support the hypothesis, only a comprehensive review of FAO and RAS performance can prove it. In addition, my research design

[5] Chin, Elaine, "Ethnographic Interviews and Writing Research: A Critical Examination of the Methodology," in Peter Smagorinsky, ed., *Speaking About Writing: Reflections on Research Methodology* (CA: SAGE, 1994), 265-6.
[6] Harrell and Bradley, *Data Collection Methods,* 53, 57, 77.
[7] Harrell and Bradley, *Data Collection Methods,* 50-51.
[8] Hubbard, Jon, "Manual on Brief Ethnographic Interviewing: Understanding an Issue, Problem or Idea from a Local Perspective," (http://www.cvt.org/resources/researchers), 1-2.
[9] Guetterman, Timothy, "Descriptions of Sampling Practices Within Five Approaches to Qualitative Research in Education and the Health Sciences," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research,* Volume 16, No. 2, Art. 25 (May 2015): 2.
[10] Harrell, Margaret C. and Melissa A. Bradley, *Data Collection Methods,* 39-40.

lacks a mechanism to demonstrate both the strength of effect and the frequency of effect for the experiences relayed in each interview. As such, respondent opinions and perspectives remain somewhat anecdotal. Nevertheless, their observations offer a candid and valuable opinion regarding the importance of single-track design.

Due to time constraints, my research focused on just 15 participants. To best mitigate the small sample size, I chose respondents with the goal of maximizing group diversity in order to sample across the broadest snapshot available. To this end, my research examined the professional experience of five FAOs, five RASs, one PAS, two linguists, one non-FAO supervisor of FAOs, and one non-FAO tasked to use his critical language skills in FAO-like duties. In terms of breakout by service, eight participants are from the Air Force, six from the Army, and one from the Navy. Their ranks spanned from E-5 to O-6. Three individuals are now retired. DLPT language skills ranged from 1+ / 1+ (reading, listening) all the way to 4 / 4 / 4 (reading, listening, speaking). The participants' range of professional experience spans 4 continents and 24 countries.

Using principles from James Spradley's approach to ethnographic interviews, the participants responded to a combination of structural, descriptive and contrast question types.[11] Instead of observing the participants *in vivo,* I leveraged my personal RAS experience to develop the initial set of questions. Due to time and access constraints, only six participants provided interviews that lasted longer than one hour. Over 120 pages of interview transcripts were analyzed for content in terms of overlap, frequency and relevance to the research question using Spradley's nine semantic relationships.[12] This analysis identified numerous themes of significant overlap within the group. These areas

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[11] Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview,* 85-91, 126-131, 160-172.
[12] Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview,* 111.

were then refined in order to develop targeted questions for post-interview follow up as well as for questioning the remaining participants via email, phone or in person. This process streamlined the questions from broad, "grand tour" inquiries to a more focused approach with structural and contrast questions.[13] Ultimately, five broad cultural themes emerged: relations, culture, time, affect and geography.

Word frequency provided a useful narrowing function, which I then followed up with a qualitative assessment for meaningful content. For example, the most frequently used word by the respondents was *think,* followed by *language.* During the interviews, respondents most often used the word think to shape content by way of opinion such as, "So, when I think of language, I think of communication. When I think of culture, I think of context, historical context and political, current political context, interpersonal behavior almost or mannerisms."[14] In this way, *think* became a helpful word for identifying opinion statements, whereas *language*, on the other hand, helped identify content pertinent to several key areas of overlap amongst the respondents, particularly in terms of culture, relations, affect and time.

For example, one individual commented, "Language is an extremely perishable skill. If you do not use it, it quickly fades away. Language is not a – it's not a permanent composition, it evolves along with the culture, along with the society."[15] In this way, qualitative analysis of the 300 most frequently used words helped identify the most salient topics of overlap and meaningful discussion. Figure 7 depicts a word cloud of the 300 most frequently used words.

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[13] See steps 4-9 in Spradley's 12-step ethnographic research process, *The Ethnographic Interview,* 135.
[14] RAS Respondent, background interview, April 7, 2017.
[15] Linguist Respondent, background interview, April 5, 2017.

Figure 7. Word Cloud. Ethnography's 300 most frequently used words.
Source: http://www.wordclouds.com/

Chapter 3

Key Observations

Today, FAOs and RAS officers carry on the tradition of warriors with international savvy, charged with translating cultural knowledge into strategic advantage. In the DOD's 2011 Annual FAO Report, Combatant Command feedback confirmed the strategic need for more FAOs, asserting that, "depending upon the country, manning FAO billets at less than the DOD goal of 95 percent heavily degrades or precludes altogether the implementation of U.S. policy in support of the Global Employment of Forces, Strategy of Active Security, and the command's Theater Campaign Plan."[1] The same report, however, questions the quality of the Joint FAO cadre, stating that Services fill some positions with, "personnel who do not possess the requisite language skills, in-country training, cultural training, or political-military experience. These shortages force commands to place unqualified FAOs or best-fit officers into essential overseas billets."[2]

A tension therefore exists within the joint FAO program: on one hand, FAOs fulfill a strategically important role, but on the other, a mismatch between desired and actual quality can arise when filling billets.[3] This tension could be the symptom of a large personnel system in which some members inevitably fall short of standards. Perhaps, the case of unqualified FAOs could arise from structural aspects related to FAO program design. In fact, a litany of documented problems now hampers the joint FAO community. In general, these problems fall into four key areas under scrutiny and debate: training, standardization,

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[1] DOD 2011 Annual Foreign Area Officer Report, *Executive Summary, 2.*
[2] DOD 2011 Annual Foreign Area Officer Report, *Executive Summary, 2.*
[3] DOD 2011 Annual Foreign Area Officer Report, *Introduction, 5-7.*

proponency and career management.[4] Each problem area in its own right presents a complex challenge to solve. Furthermore, all these areas are interrelated.

For the Army, a formal FAO tradition took root with its Foreign Area Specialist Training (FAST) program in 1945 and continued to evolve thereafter.[5] In 1969, FAST merged with another Army program, the Military Assistance Officer Program (MOAP), and formed a single training program. Essentially, this initiative consolidated two skill-sets within a single practitioner: attaché work and military assistance work. This merger soon took on the moniker "Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Management System."[6] In 1997, the Army furthered professionalized its FAO cadre with a break through in personnel management: the single-track career path.[7] The move towards fulltime area experts meant that once Army officers trained to become a FAO—usually after 7-9 years in a warfighting specialty—they remained tasked to FAO duties.[8] This move allowed for the development of highly competent FAOs with professional proficiency in language skills and regional expertise.

In contrast, the Air Force implemented its first FAO program only in 1997 as a response to DOD Directive 1315.17, which charged the Military Departments to develop formal FAO programs. Unfortunately, the Air Force's first attempt at a FAO program failed.[9] The Air Force spawned a second FAO program after the 2005 revision of DOD Directive

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[4] Alrich, Adams and Biltoc, "The Strategic Value of Foreign Area Officers," iii-vii. See also Lt Col Atteberry's "Overcoming Inertia: Building Human Capital for Interagency Success," and Robert E. O'Keefe's "Cultural Momentum: The Impact of Agency on Foreign Area Officer Support to the Geographic Combatant Commands." Lt Col Hunkins' "Regional Affairs Strategist: Deliberate Development for Senior Officers?"

[5] FAO Association website, *History of FAOA*, http://www.faoa.org/FAO-History.

[6] DA, "Department of the Army Historical Summary: FY 1972", http://www.history.army.mil/books/DAHSUM/1972/ch02.htm#b10, 23.

[7] Mitchell, "The Army FAO Training Program: Time to Break More Glass," 8.

[8] Alrich, Adams and Biltoc, "The Strategic Value of Foreign Area Officers," iii.

[9] Colonel Robert Sarnoski outlines four key challenges that undermined the Air Force's first FAO program, highlighting the lack of guidance in DoD Directive 1315.17. See his insightful overview of the program in, "United States Air Force International Affairs Specialist Program," 12-14.

1315.17. It directed the formal development of a Joint FAO cadre with international experience and professional language skills. The 2007 DOD Instruction 1315.20 provided further clarification and expectations to the Services. Unfortunately, this new guidance again lacked a standardized model of FAO program management for the Services to follow.

The Air Force chose a dual-track management design for its RAS officers.[10] This unfortunate decision has hampered the Air Force's ability to present a professional cadre of international Airmen to the Joint FAO Program.[11] More importantly, the Air Force will never present a truly professional cadre of RASs to the joint team until it switches to a single-track model. The experiences, views and opinions uncovered during my research corroborate this assertion, and I have laid out the key findings in three sections, each pertaining to one of the mechanisms of innovation discussed in the previous chapter.

1. Transposition and Refunctionality

President Roza Otunbayeva's visit to the Transit Center at Manas International Airport (TCM) in Kyrgyzstan on Sept 11, 2011, exemplifies the importance of transposition in political-military work.[12] At the time, the U.S. presence in Kyrgyzstan was under domestic scrutiny following the 2010 ouster of former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev.[13] Despite these tensions, Otunbayeva expressed her support for the U.S. efforts in front of several hundred guests and media:

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[10] Nicholson, "The Army's Single-Track FAO Program: Pathway to Success," 11-13.
[11] DOD 2011 Annual Foreign Area Officer Report, 19-20.
[12] Recounted from personal experience and discussions with those closely involved prior to conducting research.
[13] Solovyov, Dmitry, "Kyrgyz president Bakiyev flees, ending standoff," *Reuters* (April 15, 2010): www.reuters.com/article/us-kyrgyzstan-unrest-idUSTRE6363CR20100415.

> There is no doubt that the 10-year existence of the Transit Center considerably contributed in strengthening the security in Afghanistan and the region as a whole.[14]

Arguably, her speech positively influenced America's local reputation even if only for a short while. Her visit came as a surprise, however, without any indication of it just one week earlier.

Three conversations by a RAS laid the groundwork for this visit. First, the RAS hosted a Kyrgyz law professor and his students at the TCM to improve community relations. This paved the way for a visit by several international academics and a subsequent conversation about regional stability. Second, the RAS leveraged these new connections to gain access to a close advisor to the president. A conversation with this interlocutor facilitated a visit to the TCM by the president's personal security team to discuss a possible visit. This occurred less than a week prior to President Otunbayeva's visit, which was at this point still unconfirmed. Third, the RAS received an unusual call from local police about security measures just three days prior to the visit. The RAS immediately informed the head of presidential security about the unsolicited nature of the police inquiry. This tip cued the presidential security team to a break down in their internal chain of command, which they quickly remedied. Within days, President Otunbayeva delivered her landmark speech at the TCM.[15]

Senior leaders and official guidance consistently describe the mission of the Joint FAO Program as strategic in nature.[16] It remains

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[14] "Kyrgyz president remembers 9/11 at Transit Center," *Transit Center Report,* Vol. 2, Issue 8 (October 2011): 1.

[15] The successful 9/11 commemoration included many moving parts and relied on the professional dedication and commitment of many TCM, U.S. Embassy and host nation personnel. Without their extraordinary efforts, especially their ability to accommodate the last minute addition of President Otunbayeva, the event would never have happened.

[16] Alrich, Adams and Biltoc, "The Strategic Value of Foreign Area Officers," iii-iv.

generally accepted that both cultural acumen and professional language skills facilitate the transfer of strategically important, local context to leaders, planners, operators and other users. Padgett and Powell's mechanism for the emergence of organizational innovation offers a possible explanation as to how FAOs transpose this local knowledge of strategic value to different social domains. Consider the Swiss cheese model tied to a positive objective: keep open the holes of opportunity (social networks and roles) so ideas and information can flow from one domain to another for use in new, innovative ways. In other words, the FAO must function in a meaningful way in all domains so that the holes line up, thereby allowing strategic context to flow to new users.

Figure 8 below depicts a theory of how political-military practitioners bridge the military, government and language domain. My research group of respondents consistently articulated that the single track promotes innovation and expertise, while the dual track waters down RAS officers in two separate specialties. As a result, four of five RAS respondents expressed anxiety about lacking sufficient language skills, in-country experience or regional perspective required to fulfill meaningful roles in language domains.

Generally speaking, these observations focused either on key enablers for transposition or barriers against it. More specifically, a majority of participants identified the dual track as problematic in the following areas: the acquisition of professional language skills, maintaining cultural competency and the need for operational relevance.
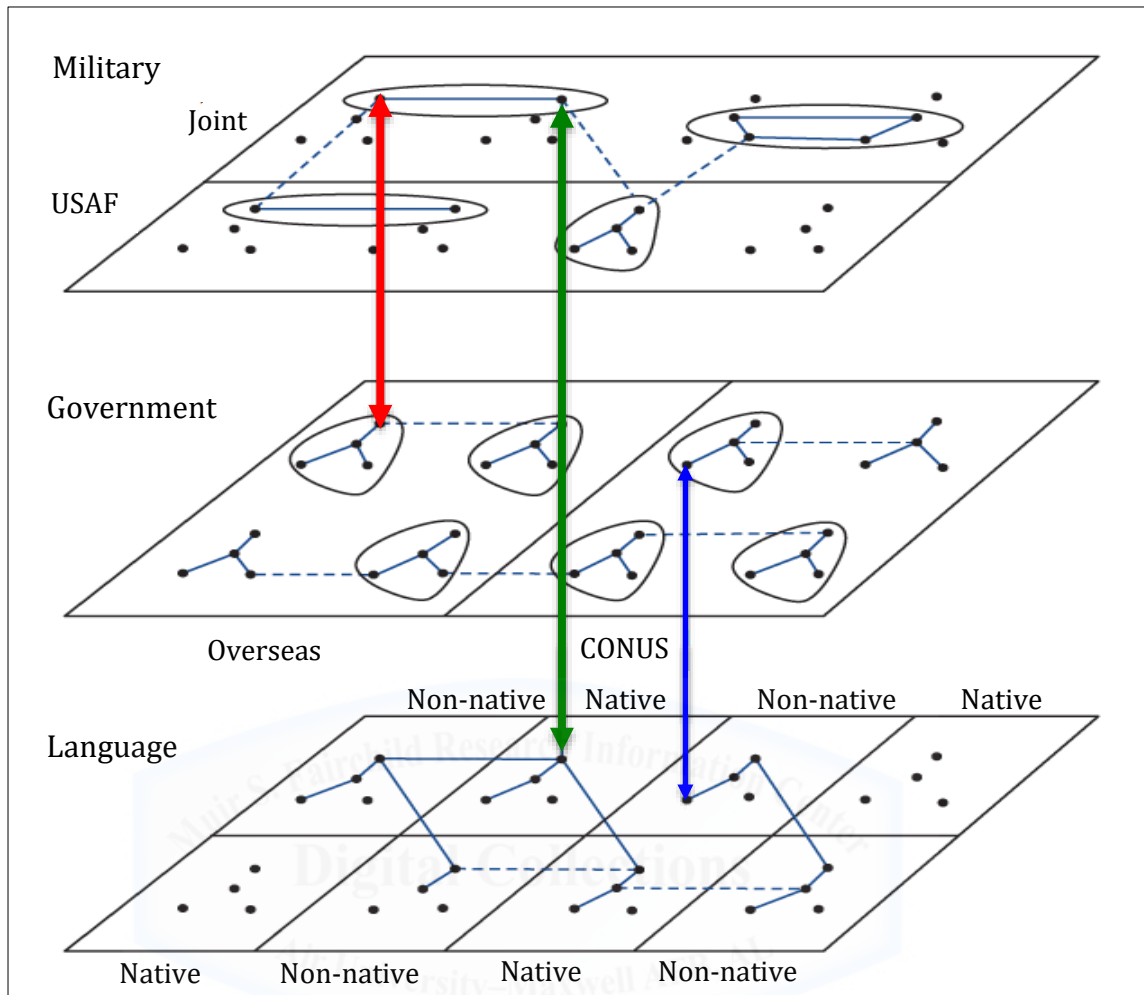
Figure 8. Single-Track Bridge to the Language Domain. Three domains of co-existent social networks are depicted. People are vertical lines and dots are their roles. The green vertical line depicts a single-track FAO with professional language skills and connections inside the Language Domain. The red vertical line depicts a dual-track RAS who lacks professional level connections to the Language Domain. The blue vertical line represents an individual with connections in the Government and Language Domains, such as a State Department Foreign Service Officer.
Source: Padgett and Powell, The Emergence of Organizations and Markets
Note: Adapted from source Figure 6.1

1.1 Transposition and Refunctionality: Speaking is the Key

A U.S. humanitarian assistance project at an elementary school in Central Asia underscores the primacy of oral proficiency in a foreign language for political-military work.[17] A small, impoverished village was

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[17] Recounted from personal experience and discussions with those closely involved prior to conducting research.

due to receive several thousand dollars worth in window repairs. The program's manager, who does not speak the local language, invited a RAS to meet with the school director late in the project's timeline, but prior to completion. After a walk around the school with the director, the RAS asked why she needed windows. She replied, "I don't, I need a fence."

Unfortunately, the humanitarian assistance project suffered from miscommunication. Apparently, some locals threw rocks into the windows at night but the director believed a good fence would keep them out. The school director discussed the broken windows to some American military visitors in 2008 and 2009, speaking through a host nation interpreter. According to the director, new Americans later returned in 2011 with a work plan to refurbish the entire school with new, double-pain windows from Europe. She told the RAS that stopping the project would cause the village elder problems. On the other hand, going ahead with the project would also cause problems. First, she had no money to replace expensive European windows if the rock throwing continued. Second, the school's reserve of inexpensive, single-pain windows would no longer fit the window seals after the upgrade. All this stemmed from a simple lack of communication.

Professional language skills, underpinned by oral proficiency, remain the mainstay for FAOs and RASs. Indeed, during interviews with the research group, the second most frequently used word was *language*.[18] These discussions primarily focused on foreign language acquisition and maintenance. According to DOD Directive 1315.17 and DOD Instruction 1315.20, qualified FAOs will have professional language skills as defined by the Interagency Language Roundtable Level 3 in two modalities of usage: reading and listening. According to the 2011 Annual

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[18] The top ten most frequently used words are as follows (frequency in parenthesis): think (230), language (220), know (213), people (136), say (122), FAO (122), time (115), speak (93), skill (87), understand (82).

FAO Report, only 45% of Joint FAOs comply with this standard.[19] Still worse, only one of my research respondents stated that a Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) score of 3 Reading / 3 Listening would suffice for FAO duties. In fact, all but one respondent stated that the essential language modality for FAOs is *speaking* because, as one FAO put it, "forming relationships is the key to everything a FAO does.*"* Eight respondents stated the minimum language skills a FAO needs in order to be considered professional is 3 / 3 / 3, a format depicting DLPT 3 (reading) / DLPT 3 (listening) / Oral Proficiency Exam (OPI) 3. Finally, 4 respondents argued that professional language proficiency actually starts at a score of 4 out of 5 on all three of the abovementioned modalities.[20]

Regarding barriers to language acquisition, the respondents identified the highly perishable nature of language skills as the primary problem for sustainment. In this respect, every respondent intimated a preference for a single-track career path. Three Army respondents claimed that the fundamental superiority of FAOs over RAS officers rests in language sustainment through meaningful on-the-job usage. In each case, respondents articulated that the single-track model is essential to language sustainment. All of the RAS respondents confirmed atrophy of their language skills within weeks or months after transferring from a RAS billet into a new job with no language requirements. Three of five RASs feel this atrophy to be "significant."

RAS officers identified time and opportunity costs as the culprits behind the loss of language skills. Simply put, the work demands placed on RAS officers when serving in non-RAS billets do not afford enough time or opportunity to sustain professional language skills. Only one Air Force respondent voiced having benefited from USAF Language

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[19] Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *DoD 2011 Annual Foreign Area Officer Report*, executive summary.
[20] According to the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, not all languages have the updated "DLPT 5" test.

Sustainment programs such as LEAP or LASI, but even in this case, the benefit was fleeting. One RAS respondent remarked, "...if the Chief (of Staff) says we need to get back to basics at the squadron and we need to slash the admin pile up because folks can't get their primary job done, it's unrealistic to think there's also time to maintain a high level of language and culture skills on top of this."

A majority of respondents commented that proficient DLPT scores do not necessarily mean they possess the actual language skills required in their jobs, noting a substantial variance in vocabulary and conversational dynamics across different FAO duties (e.g. DAO, OSC, Joint Staff, Arms Control, POW-MIA, etc.). Of the 12 respondents who have worked with Army FAOs, all expressed an opinion that, generally speaking, Army FAOs are superior to RAS officers. In terms of Padgett and Powell's construct for novelty, a FAO can only transpose innovation across domains until she first fulfills a meaningful role inside the language domain. Based on feedback from my research group, FAOs are more "polished," "sharper" and "the best" because they "consistently" demonstrate regional insight acquired with professional language skills used during the fulfillment of official and unofficial roles, both professional and social, inside the host nation.

1.2 Transposition and Refunctionality: Cultural Competency

A RAS respondent's experience in the Republic of Korea (ROK) exemplifies the importance of cultural competency.[21] While fulfilling a liaison role to a ROK flag officer, the RAS bridged specific personalities and cultural divides with the Seventh Air Force in order to maximize both communication and a feeling of mutual commitment in daily meetings and other interactions:

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[21] RAS Respondent, background interview, April 4, 2017.

> …whether we are talking about NATO or the Iraq-US alliance or Japan or any of the others, dozens of alliances and coalitions so forth that we have, you have to know and understand how to work with those international partners and there is so much cultural overlay on how we act, how we prioritize, how we make decisions, hierarchies et cetera that if we try to sort of do the American way, it just doesn't go over well with some people.[22]

According to the RAS, perhaps the most important aspects of his job, although considered a secondary function, involved routinely briefing senior Air Force leaders on how to navigate Korean culture, with a focus military culture:

> how they make decisions, how they reach decisions, what things are important to them, what things are not important.[23]

In his opinion, this gave the U.S. officers a "leg up." Unfortunately, sometimes individuals fail to heed cultural advice, as was the case during an official military visit to Moscow in July, 2013.[24] As reported in *The Washington Post*,[25] a senior Air Force leader insulted his Russian hosts and embarrassed the U.S. government with conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman.[26]

Although single track management may be preferred among FAOs and RASs alike, many RAS officers are still able to maintain the directed DLPT 3 / 3 proficiency despite their dual track. Many possibilities other than USAF language sustainment programs explain this: they are a native speaker, their spouse or other family members are native speakers or they acquired professional language skills prior to commissioning,

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[22] RAS Respondent, background interview, April 4, 2017.
[23] RAS Respondent, background interview, April 4, 2017.
[24] Recounted from discussions with an individual involved prior to conducting research.
[25] Whitlock, Craig, "Report: U.S. Air Force general drank too much, fraternized with foreign women in Moscow," *The Washington Post* (December 19, 2013): https://www.washingtonpost.com
[26] Inspector General of the Air Force, "Report of Investigation (S8011P)," October 2013.

such as during missionary work overseas or while studying abroad. Even in these cases, however, all respondents articulated that language alone is but one aspect of cultural competency. To this end, 10 respondents commented that cultural competency, like language, is also perishable, though perhaps less so.

The Army respondents discussed the value of cultural proficiency in terms of persistence. In other words, the dual track does not sufficiently keep RAS officers "dialed in" to the host nation or region. A majority of all respondents articulated a key component of cultural competency as being able to sift through local context and identify "opportunity" and "risk." One respondent commented that the metaphor of a FAO as a bridge spanning between two cultures is insufficient; rather, a FAO is a "filter" that sorts through all the data to find meaning, prioritize it and then share it. In the context of transposition between social domains, the single-track design by default doubles the amount of time FAOs spend in formal roles located inside a language domain. Put another way, the Air Force removes RAS officers from this context for every other assignment cycle. Maintaining cultural persistence underpins what the research group generally agrees is the Army FAOs' superior sense-making ability. In other words, the dual track waters down RASs' ability to find and filter strategic meaning, while the Army's single track provides more time and persistence to hone this vital skill.

1.3 Transposition and Refunctionality: Operational Relevance

One of the FAO respondents broached the issue of operational relevance in the context of host nation expectations and the need to relate to something during military-to-military relations:

> They [foreign counterparts] want to see credibility and talk what they know before opening up to policy or whatever. If they're army, they want to see an army

uniform. If it's the navy, they want a sailor... pilots
love to talk their stuff. [27]

Another FAO opined that over time a lack of direct operational duties
does not affect FAOs because they do not often work with operational
units or weapons systems; rather, FAOs usually work in policy, staff and
embassy jobs:

> When I tell them [foreign counterparts] I'm from
> armor... they're like, oh hey what's up oh that's kind of
> our man you used to be an armor guy... and none of
> us have been operational for years, even them... I don't
> see FAOs screwing up their advice and their
> performance based on a lack of operational experience.
> I see them screwing up their performance and advice
> based on lack of area expertise.[28]

This FAO, however, also argued those in attaché work should possess an
initial background in operations. This remains especially true for RASs
because their host nation counterparts and fellow air attachés are
usually fliers. Finally, three FAOs observed that biases sometimes affect
how operational commanders view them. First, the FAOs insist that
some leaders refuse to acknowledge that a "lowly" major can make a
strategic impact. Second, high operational tempos naturally prompt
commanders to focus on solving daily problems at the tactical and
operational levels under their direct prevue. In this light, some view
FAOs as not contributing to short-term needs.

Arguably, the key perceived benefit of the dual-track design is that
alternating assignments in a core specialty maintains operationally
relevant RAS officers. Joint FAOs typically begin their training only after
7-10 years of experience in a non-FAO military specialty.[29] The
argument that single track FAOs can lose touch with operational needs

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[27] FAO Respondent, background interview, April 7, 2017.
[28] FAO Respondent, background interview, May 8, 2017.
[29] Alrich, Adams and Biltoc, "The Strategic Value of Foreign Area Officers," 7.

over time remains a legitimate concern.[30] At the same time, operational relevance may accrue at the expense of FAO experience. In other words, Padgett and Powell's mechanism of transposition suggests RAS officers may remain operationally relevant at the cost of failing to develop a FAO skill-set worthy of making strategic linkages within a target country or region.

Just as a communications officer can map the flow of electrons between space-based surveillance systems and end users in a combined air operations center, a social scientist can map how innovation transfers vertically through coexistent domains and horizontally across social networks. These flows never just happen; they require connections. The extension of Padgett and Powell's discussion indicates that, first and foremost, a FAO requires a single-track design in order to become sufficiently connected to the language domain and to truly benefit the Joint FAO Program.

Feedback from nine respondents framed the dilemma of operational relevance in terms of pursuing two goals. The first goal is to develop FAOs with a professional international skill-set. The second goal is to ensure that these skill-sets remain operationally relevant. If a management design fails to achieve the first goal, the second becomes irrelevant to the Joint FAO Program. In this respect, all respondents commented that the single track is superior to the dual track. More importantly, eight respondents strongly believe that the dual track fails to develop RAS officers of a strategically relevant quality. Several cited examples of outstanding RAS officers executing their jobs at a high level, but in each case, the skills and regional expertise were largely self-obtained, either as native speakers or through experience accrued prior to commissioning.

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[30] Vane and Fagundes, "Redefining the Foreign Area Officer's Role," *Military Review,* May-June 2004, 15-19.

Several respondents asserted that a single track program can maintain FAOs with operational relevance if the program manages individual careers to achieve breadth across the full range of FAO duties. For example, if a FAO fulfills four attaché jobs in a row, she may become pigeon holed. Alternatively, a mixed resume of service, joint and interagency jobs maintains proximity to operations without detrimental interruptions spent filling non-FAO billets. Three other respondents felt the focus on operational relevance is a red herring altogether. These individuals stated that service members become FAOs only after extensive experience in their respective operational careers. Therefore, maintaining a sufficient awareness of operational context takes relatively little effort and naturally occurs through the course of most FAO duties. For these FAOs, the best way to balance FAO with both operational relevance and persistence in overseas activities is to manage assignments not by function—either FAO or non-FAO—but by ensuring proximity to operations via a healthy mix of FAO duties in service, joint and interagency billets.

2. Incorporation and Detachment

As discussed in Chapter 1, the mechanism of incorporation and detachment explains how FAOs can innovate through the creation of new relationships and roles overseas. These novel relationships can be a rich source of strategic insight and information that can spill over into new social networks. The single-track model of RAS management, however, impedes the development of true experts, and in some cases, it actually harms the implementation of national foreign policy objectives. The case of the Transit Center at Manas International Airport (TCM) in Kyrgyzstan demonstrates how incorporation and detachment can work in a FAO context. It also illustrates the danger of metrics-driven approaches to political-military affairs.
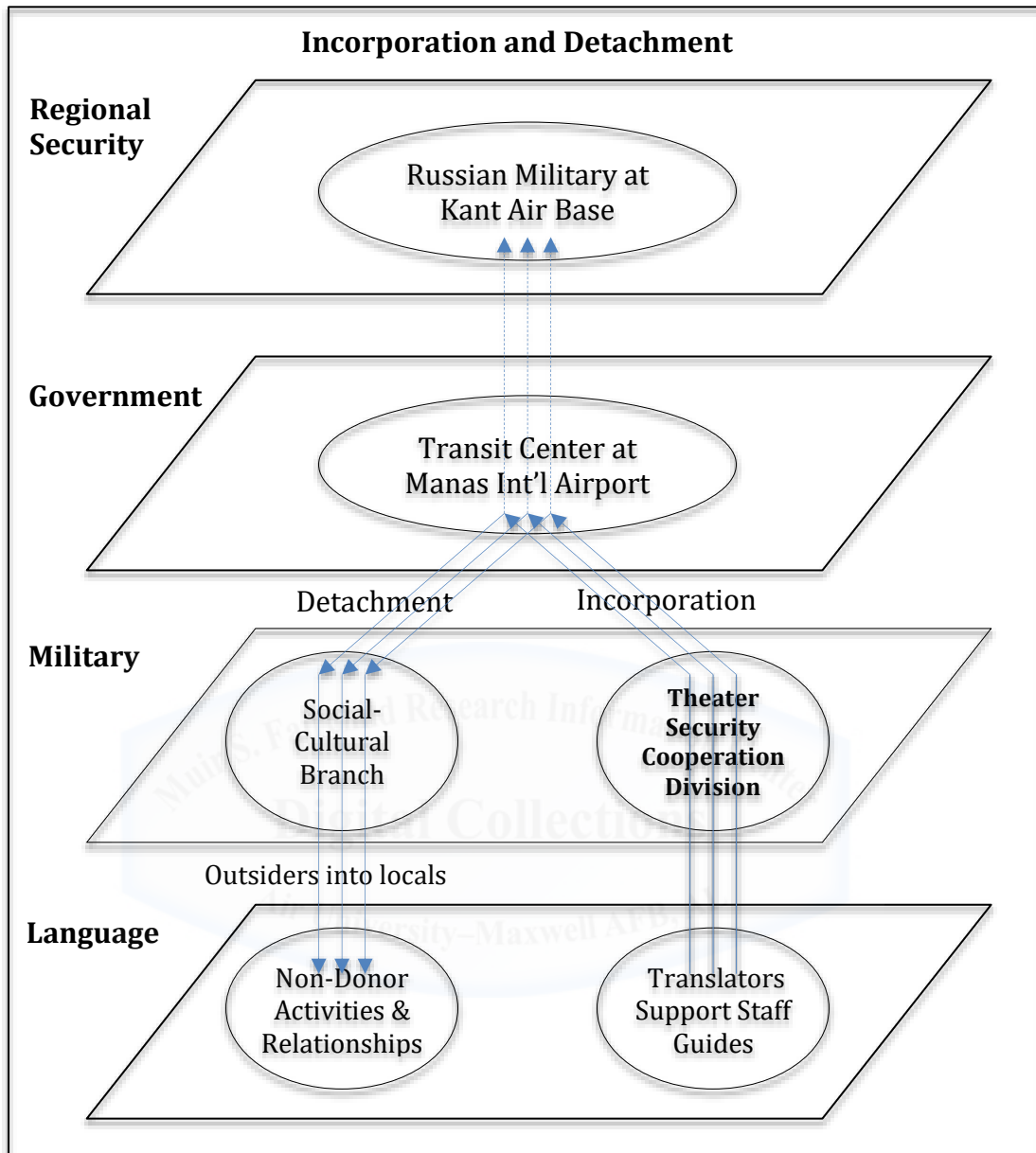
Figure 9. Incorporation and Detachment in Kyrgyzstan. The 2011 introduction of a TSC Division into the Transit Center at Manas in Kyrgyzstan.
Source: Padgett and Powell, The Emergence of Organizations and Markets
Note: Adapted from source Figure 1.4a

Based on inputs from several respondents with first-hand experience, Figure 9 depicts incorporation and detachment using the 2011 introduction of a Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) Division into

the TCM.[31] In this case, the TSC began as a hybrid organization with overlapping identities, supported by the inclusion of limited host nation staff (solid upward arrows). Over time, the TSC's Social-Cultural Branch detached itself from daily Transit Center activities and formed its own exchange relations in the local community (solid downward arrows). Over time, these relations spun off into activities not associated with the donor-related functions tied to the TSC missions of military-to-military cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Additionally, transpositions occurred with the Kant Air Base community, located roughly 20 kilometers from the TCM, in the context of regional security cooperation (dashed arrows).[32]

Despite the TSC's ability to develop relationships of strategic importance, as evidenced by interim President Roza Otunbayeva's hallmark visit to the TCM on September 11, 2011, a lack of expertise and continuity stymied the good intentions of otherwise outstanding Airmen. For example, in 2010 the TCM spent $750,000 to refurbish a building and turn it into a crisis center for battered and homeless women. According to the Central Asian media outlet, *EurasiaNet,* the center never opened. Worse still, the center's director sold the premises to her son under dubious circumstances for 18,000 Kyrgyz som, or roughly $300.[33] Effectively, U.S. taxpayers funded a $750,000 private compound for a Kyrgyz woman and her son.

According to respondents, locals alleged that a litany of other failed outreach and humanitarian projects irked village populations around the TCM. In each case, simply doing nothing would have been better than

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[31] Figure 4 is modeled after Padgett & Powell's research on the genesis of medieval corporations in Dugento Tuscany. See *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets,* 121-145 and figure 1.4a, 17.

[32] This example has been derived from author's personal experience as well as accounts from research respondents (see Chap 2). This example is for illustrative purposes only, and is neither a definitive nor official government view on activities related to the Transit Center at Manas.

[33] *EurasiaNet* with Anna Lelik contributing, "Kyrgyzstan: Pentagon-Funded Women's Shelter Illegally Privatized – MP," 3 Feb 2015.

taking action. One respondent characterized the TCM as "a self-licking ice-cream cone" because each subsequent rotation of personnel took bold action, claimed success, ignored failure and moved on. The Kyrgyz government closed the TCM in 2014.

Successful innovation, however, requires that emergent connections survive the processes of competitive selection inherent in the normal rules of production and communication protocols. In hierarchical constructs, survival of emergent connections often requires support from top-tier echelons of power.[34] In this light, several research respondents characterize the negative consequences of a dual track RAS cadre in terms of top-down empowerment coupled with weak continuity. Two concepts best describe this concern: the Rolodex and the Hippocratic Oath.

2.1 Incorporation and Detachment: The Rolodex

All but two respondents articulated that relationships are the most important aspect of FAO work. It takes time for political-military practitioners to cultivate and maintain fruitful relationships in country, a process typically measured not in days or months, but years or decades. Single-track management by design facilitates a healthy Rolodex, whereas the dual track's "down time" spent in non-FAO billets disrupts relationship formation. Commenting on three embassy tours, of which only one exceeded four months, one RAS expressed frustration in that, "every job is like groundhog's day, starting something from scratch despite the job not being new." Every Air Force respondent raised concerns over continuity.

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[34] In "The Emergence of Organizations and Markets," 127-144, John Padgett describes the influential role the king of England played in the survival of the Tuscan merchant-banks in the 14th century.

In contrast, each Army respondent spoke optimistically about maintaining positive relationships over time, relishing the opportunity to cast a wide net of social connections with each successive assignment. For example, one FAO described how relationships with foreign counterparts continually overlapped, from attaché to security cooperation and later policy assignments at the Pentagon. According to 11 respondents, dual-track design is a sure-fire way to impede the formation of enduring relationships.

Three FAO respondents explained why some relationships are hard to handover to a replacement. First, FAOs usually generate more relationships than a handover period allows for. Relationships often require multiple in-person meetings. Sometimes, contacts dislike change and therefore remain wary of replacements. FAOs also find that not all partners are available during handover periods. Therefore, FAOs prioritize which contacts to handover and which relationships to retain for the future. Eight of fifteen respondents agree that relationships, like language skills, weaken over time if neglected. The remaining seven expressed no opinion. Five of six army respondents feel they actively maintain a robust rolodex. Only one of five RAS respondents, however, feels he possesses a professional rolodex for his region.

2.2 Incorporation and Detachment: Do No Harm

Despite the alternating assignments of the dual track, RAS officers devotedly execute their duties when in FAO billets. In the short run, some RAS officers demonstrate outstanding, singular efforts. However, the rub is this: in the long run, their collective but disjointed efforts may actually end up doing harm to the Joint FAO Program. According to eight respondents, the dual-track design places unintended, but serious, stressors on relationships with foreign counterparts. Over time, this

negative stress hurts the implementation of U.S. foreign policy objectives. Respondents described several ways in which this tension occurs.

First, the Air Force dual track design, 12 years since its creation, still experiences manning gaps in key positions overseas. Foreign partners become tired of these continuity gaps, either viewing them as strategic messaging that the bilateral relationship is not important to the U.S., or simply frustrated with creating the same relationship over and over again with the "new guy" who will, "do his best and work really hard" despite lacking a solid handover from a predecessor. According to respondents, the Army also gaps positions from time to time, however, FAOs typically repair damaged relationships through expertise and a healthy Rolodex built in theater while executing other related FAO duties. In contrast, four Air Force respondents voiced concerns about damaged relationships resulting from poor RAS continuity.

Second, RAS respondents commented that they had to do "damage control" when they first show up in a new FAO billet, especially when filling TDY billets. Arguably, Air Force officers strive for excellence despite imperfect conditions or amidst a lack of resources. Airmen naturally, "make the best of any situation" through action. Several respondents argued that the Hippocratic Oath—do no harm—should temper the default optimism exuded by Airmen when they perform FAO duties. The consequences of, "just doing the best I can with what I got" often backfires. Numerous respondents discussed experiencing broken relationships with host nation partners in the wake of actions by a well intentioned but "part-time" RAS. In fact, three FAO and two RAS respondents would prefer terminating the RAS program altogether in its current form rather than perpetuate, "doing harm."

Third, Air Force officer performance report (OPR) timelines encourage seeking tangible results faster than local conditions warrant. Temporally, measuring cause and effect (or even correlation of effects) in political-military affairs usually takes longer than the interval between

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officer performance reports. The Air Force dual track requires RAS officers to "remain competitive and viable" in two separate career fields.[35] Air Force respondents expressed a concern that career competition fosters "bullet chasing" - the tendency to garner quick on-the-job results for inclusion in annual performance reports. Paper-driven results often reflect in OPR impact statements expressed in terms of dollars spent or quantity of interaction. The lack of quality falls on the, "next guy." Army respondents, in contrast, expressed being content with the single track's focus on career success rooted in a fluid process of continual job progression. In this light, respondents articulated that foreign partners place a premium on restraint, patience, commitment, trust and expertise. Furthermore, they feel that proactive, results-driven agendas typically run counter to the long-term goals that the U.S. maintains with allies, partners and neutrals.

3. Robust Action and Multivocality

A situation of unpaid farmers in Central Asia exemplifies robust action and the multivocality of U.S. interests overseas.[36] A respondent explained that unfilled RAS billets, without overlap from other Joint FAOs, caused a lack of political-military continuity in a Central Asian country. These unfilled positions signaled American neglect to local and regional partners. Consequently, these strained relations damaged U.S. interests on several levels. First, host nation farmers became upset with the U.S. government; yet, senior leaders remained unaware of growing disconnect amongst the locals, largely because few Americans maintained relations in the local community. Second, domestic politicians began to question the U.S. presence in their country. Third,

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[35] Sarnoski, "United States Air Force International Affairs Specialist Program," 13.
[36] FAO Respondent, background interview, April 20, 2017.

two states that compete with the U.S. regionally began to fill the leadership void created by American inaction.

Once the RAS understood the situation, he began working within the interagency to remedy it. It turns out the farmers received money based on an arrangement concerning fields in close proximity to an installation used by U.S. forces. U.S. contracting officials disbursed the money to the farmers via official channels in the host nation's Ministry of Defense. For whatever reason, the farmers failed to receive their money for roughly half a year. The initial American response came across to locals as, "this is not America's problem, we paid the MOD." Unfortunately, these payment issues were a problem. Local disconnect closed opportunities that were otherwise open to the U.S. interagency in matters not directly associated to the military, such as education (U.S. State Department), health (USAID) and agricultural initiatives (U.S. Department of Agriculture). By the time the U.S. and MOD resolved the farmers' payments, the RAS's temporary duty assignment came to an end. He departed the region back to a non-FAO job.

Ironically, "re-blueing" RAS officers with alternating assignments actually diminishes airminded inputs within the Joint FAO mission. According to 10 respondents, RASs on a single track would have more opportunities to deliver airminded inputs in the Joint FAO work environment. This is because joint and interagency credibility starts with FAO skills. All of the respondents agreed that, in general, Army FAOs outperform their RAS counterparts when performing FAO duties. Consequently, joint and interagency partners prefer and seek out Army inputs over RAS inputs. This state of affairs naturally neglects airminded viewpoints. The research respondents' views on the single track versus dual track debate culminate with the application of robust action and multivocality.

As discussed in Chapter 1, robust action focuses on strategic innovation, encompassing big picture context and all the instruments of

power—diplomatic, international, military and economic. In this light, Joint FAOs are strategic assets well suited to understanding and advising on the complex dynamics of robust action and multivocality. The extent to which Airmen contribute at the strategic level of Joint FAO work largely depends on their depth and breadth of FAO competency. Unfortunately, only one RAS respondent, a native speaker, confirmed having professional-level language and regional skills on par with Army FAOs. This individual, however, also agreed that most RASs do not have the appropriate language or in-country experience to make a strategic impact on the Joint FAO mission. More specifically, the respondents articulated several factors that inhibit leveraging airmindedness in strategic regional affairs: a lack of persistence in host nation social domains, lack of in-country stakeholder perspectives, and the inability to quickly understand changes in regional conditions or trends.

The DOD should view individual FAO persistence in a region differently than Service-specific continuity. According to most respondents, sending inexperienced or under qualified officers into the same FAO billet over many years will not yield accrued institutional competency for that specific duty location. Instead, all the RAS and FAO respondents alike agreed that an individual's cumulative time in a region remains at the heart of strategic competency. Five respondents hold the opinion that parochial interests of the Air Force weaken the greater Joint FAO Program. They argue that the dual track career management reflects a less than "all in" commitment, detracting from regional perseverance. In addition, 10 respondents feel the Air Force dual track simply cannot deliver a cadre of experts due to a lack of individual persistence in region.

According to eight respondents, RAS officers tend to lack a diverse understanding of regional stakeholders and their often diverse and contradictory interests. This kind of knowledge gap impedes the creation of opportunities to innovate strategically. The multivocality of U.S.

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interests demands a command of regional interests in order to keep its options open while at the same time shutting down opportunities to its adversaries. Simply put, the single track better prepares FAOs to contribute to joint, interagency and combined efforts at a regional and strategic level. Because the Army systematically develops its foreign affairs specialists in a dedicated career track, land-centric perspectives of its FAOs tend to overshadow the airminded interests of Air Force counterparts. Four respondents commented that the perceived preference for FAO expertise at the regional level of expertise negatively impacts the opportunities and options for in-country access that facilitate how the Joint Team can harness the tenants of airpower.

Finally, the majority of respondents identified the lack of persistence in country by individual RAS officers as blocking a key to robust action: identifying emerging opportunities. Often, it takes a long-term perspective, measured in years and decades, to identify salient contrasts or changes in a strategic, regional context. Twelve respondents believe single-track management to be significantly better than the dual track in terms of developing FAOs with the proper depth of in-country expertise that is required to make sense of a region's continually changing context. A lack of individuals with in-depth regional experience and uninterrupted language skills, according to nine respondents, negatively affects the extent to which RAS officers can contribute airminded ideas to joint and interagency efforts in a region.

Chapter 4

Conclusion and Recommendations

My conclusion is that Army Foreign Area Officers (FAO) and Air Force Regional Affairs Strategists (RAS) perform a job that is as much social as it is technical. I arrived at my findings viewing political-military practitioners through a lens of organizational innovation demonstrated by John F. Padgett and Walter W. Powell.[1] Their work highlights the roles of social networks and the flow of innovative ideas and information across multiple domains. Nowhere is that more important than in cross-cultural situations where novel solutions to strategic challenges are hard to find.

My research qualitatively analyzes interviews with fifteen political-military practitioners to examine how Army FAOs and Air Force RASs gain strategic insight into local contexts and then transfer it to relevant users in military and other government channels. The two largest contributors to the Joint FAO Program, the Army and the Air Force, produce disparately qualified personnel because of differing approaches to development and utilization. When viewed through a lens of emergent organizational innovation, their experience and observations identify three key flaws in the Air Force's dual-track design.

First, the dual-track path inhibits the flow of strategically important context from flowing across three coexistent social domains relevant to FAO work: military, government and language. According to the mechanism of transposition, ideas and innovation flow across points in common—the roles played by FAOs and RASs. Unfortunately, by alternating RAS officers in non-FAO operational assignments, the Air Force never fully develops its cadre with professional language skills or

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[1] Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets.*

consistent networking opportunities in the social domains. Instead, RAS officers tend to transfer already-known information only between the government and military domains, never fully developing local roles in the host country or region. Consequently, the RAS cadre in general fails to transfer the strategic salience of the local or regional context to U.S. military and civilian leaders.

Second, the mechanism of incorporation and detachment highlights the danger of fielding an inconsistently developed RAS cadre. Frequent personnel turnover and the use of under-qualified officers in political-military billets overseas can run counter to Air Force and joint missions abroad. In this light, RASs are likely to make strategic decisions without ever seeing or appreciating the second and third order effects on political-military relations. The case of nearly $750,000 lost to a scam involving a fraudulent women's center in Kyrgyzstan provides an example of the damage that can be done to the U.S. image abroad. This damage incurs when good, but underprepared Airmen, armed primarily with a positive attitude and honest intentions, take the initiative to engage local populations out of context and with rushed expectations. Indeed, according to research interviews, dual-track RASs should embrace restraint and a philosophy of doing no harm because their host nation counterparts often view relationships on much longer time scales than those facilitated by RAS assignments and utilization.

Third, the dual-track design focuses on keeping RAS officers operationally relevant with alternating assignments in non-FAO billets, but this comes at the cost of watering down their strategic and joint value within the Joint FAO community. The mechanism of robust action and multivocality suggests that U.S. political-military officers must maintain persistent social connections and deep regional insight in order to identify strategic opportunities. This concept underpins the interagency task of keeping relational options open within a region and denying the same to competitors. Numerous research respondents

discussed the need for FAOs to develop both depth and breadth inside a region, based on multiple assignments and fulfilling a range of roles across social domains. Unfortunately, the dual-track path, according to their experience, fails to deliver. Instead, the respondents unanimously agreed that the single-track remains the only current model that consistently develops professional-level FAOs.

The research presented in this paper gives rise to several implications. First, dual-track RAS officers will rarely perform on the same level as single-track FAOs. This performance disparity results because the dual-track approach impedes the development of meaningful roles, relations and connections inside the language domain. Without depth of knowledge and experience in the language domain, the RAS cadre will neither decipher local context accurately, nor consistently bridge cultural divides.

Second, the Army will remain the "gold standard" in the Joint FAO community so long as the Air Force continues with a dual track. As such, airminded perspectives will tend to take a back seat to land-oriented ones in Joint FAO and interagency strategy. This "standard" will change only when the RAS cadre sheds its part-time image.

Third, the dual track's "reblueing" may keep RASs airminded but at the cost of losing a seat at the Joint FAO table. A better way to advance ideas specific to the Air Force in the Joint FAO community is to switch to a single track. By doing so, the Air Force may develop RAS officers with less airmindedness but at least these officers will have a seat at the table based on professional language skills and regional expertise. These highly perishable skills simply do not survive over time in a dual-track design.

While this paper concludes that the dual-track model of RAS utilization falls well short of the single track in terms of innovation and bridging social domains, the narrow scope and time constraints limited the discussion to just one area relevant to FAO development. Other

areas of FAO program management are also relevant to the wider discussion on how to manage FAOs: joint proponency, standardization for training and education as well as other service-specific issues such as personnel recruitment, flying gate management, career advancement and competitiveness for promotion and command opportunities. All of these aspects in FAO management deserve consideration and refinement. However, this paper's research suggests that perfecting these other areas while still maintaining a dual-track design would change little in terms of enabling RASs to innovate in social networks and across coexistent social domains—the very thing that makes them strategic assets.

Given the efficacy of the single-track design, the next steps in building a truly professional RAS cadre in the Air Force should focus on identifying Airmen that can best infuse airmindedness in joint and interagency FAO billets as full-time, single-track experts. Perhaps, a good first start would be for the Air Force to embrace the Joint nature of FAOs and the paradox that the more time they spend in operational Air Force duties, the less likely they are to actually leverage airmindedness within the Joint FAO community. The Air Force might consider leading an effort to standardize training and utilization within the DOD, building upon the Army's single track with the Air Force's edge in space and cyber, two areas that will feature prominently in future relations abroad.

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